

**SECTION I**  
**AMENDMENTS**

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1 and 11 as set forth below.

**Complete Listing of the Claims**

Upon entry of the present amendment, the claims will stand as follows. The following listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the present application:

1. (Currently amended) A panel element comprising: a utilization side, a counter draw opposite the utilization side, a first side having a tongue, a second side which is located opposite the first side and has a groove with a contour opposite to that of the tongue, the tongue having a connecting element which extends substantially normal to the utilization side and whose cross-section has a first flank and a second flank opposite the first flank, the cross-section of the connecting element having a first section and a second section essentially parallel to the plane of the utilization side, wherein the first section comprising a root region of the connecting element is positioned near the utilization side and the second section positioned adjacent and outermost to the first section and the cross-section of the connecting element having a center line normal to the utilization side and - viewed in the direction from the utilization side to the counter draw - the inclination of the first flank and the second flank each points from the center line outwards in the first section of the connecting element, the cross-section of the connecting element is widened from the root region of the connecting element throughout the first section, and in the second section the inclination of the first flank points from the center line outwards and the inclination of the second flank points to the center line, the distance normal to the center line being reduced between the first flank and second flank, wherein the first flank is arranged on the side of the connecting element ~~facing away from proximal to the first side of the panel element and the second flank is arranged on the side of the connecting element distal to the first side of the panel element.~~
2. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the inclination of the first flank and the inclination of the second flank are substantially constant in the first section.
3. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 2, wherein the first flank has

an angle inclination smaller in the first section than that of the second flank in the first section.

4. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 2, wherein the inclination of the first flank is substantially constant in the second section and commensurates with the inclination of the first flank in the first section.

5. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the second flank of the connecting element is rounded in the second section.

6. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the groove has a recess with a contour opposite to that of the connecting element and, when the groove is connected with the tongue of another similar panel element, the connecting element with the first and second flank of the another similar panel element is inserted into the recess of the groove, wherein a first contact point is formed between the first flank of the connecting element of the another similar panel element and the groove and a second contact point is formed between the second flank of the connecting element of the another similar panel element and the groove essentially opposite to the first contact point.

7. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 6, characterized in that a glue channel is formed in the recess of the groove on a surface of the recess parallel to the counter draw side.

8. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the groove further comprises a glue channel, and wherein the glue channel is an undercut adjacent and parallel to the utilization side and is positioned opposite to the face side of tongue of the other similar panel element when groove is connected with tongue of the other similar panel element.

9. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 8, wherein when the tongue of one panel is connected with the groove of another similar panel element - a continuous gap is formed adjacent to at least a section of the second side.

10. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 9, wherein vertical sides and sides perpendicular thereto of the panel element are at least partially treated with a hydrophobic agent.

11. (Currently amended) An interlocking floor system comprising at least two panel elements, wherein a panel element comprises:

a utilization side;

a counter draw side opposite to the utilization side;

a first side essentially normal to the utilization side, wherein the first side comprises a tongue positioned near the utilization side and extending beyond the counter draw side;

a second side which is located opposite the first side, wherein the second side comprises a groove positioned near the counter draw side, and wherein the groove extends beyond the utilization side and includes a contour opposite to that of the tongue;

wherein the tongue comprises a connecting element which extends vertically away from the utilization side and substantially normal to the utilization side; wherein the connecting element has a cross-section comprising:

a first flank ~~positioned near the first side~~ arranged on the side of the connecting element proximal to the first side of the panel element and a second flank ~~that is positioned opposite the first flank arranged on the side of the connecting element distal to the first side of the panel element~~;

a first section and a second section that are essentially parallel to the plane of the utilization side and extend between the first and second flanks, wherein the first section comprising a root region of the connecting element is positioned near the utilization side and the second section is positioned adjacent and outermost to the first section; and

the cross-section of the connecting element having a center line normal to the utilization side,

and wherein the cross-section of the connecting element is widened from the root region of the connecting element throughout the first section, and wherein in the first section the distance from the center line to the first flank is less than the distance from the center line to the second flank, and wherein in the second section, the distance from the center line to the first flank gradually increases at a constant angle while the distance from the center line to the second flank gradually decreases on an arcuating incline.

12. (Previously presented) The interlocking floor system according to claim 11, wherein in the first section the distance from the center line to the first flank is increasing and the distance from the center line to the second flank is increasing.

13. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 11, wherein the distance from the center line to the first flank and the distance from the center line to the second flank are measured along a single plane perpendicular to the center line.

14. (Previously presented) The panel element according to claim 6 wherein the second flank of the connecting element is rounded in the second section and the second contact point between the connecting element of the another similar panel element and the groove is formed on the rounded section of the second flank essentially opposite to the first contact point.

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